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Biden expands military operations in Afghanistan amid withdrawal crisis

Appearing yesterday at his first White House press conference since the fall of Kabul, US President Joe Biden tried again to play down the historic and humiliating blow suffered by the US and its allies in their 20-year neo-colonial war in Afghanistan.



A U.S. Chinook helicopter flies over the city of Kabul, Afghanistan, Sunday, Aug. 15 2021. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)

At the same time, he said 6,000 US troops could stay in the country beyond the August 31 deadline agreed with the Taliban, on the pretext of rescuing US citizens and selected Afghans. “I think we can get [evacuations] done by then, but we’re going to make that judgment as we go,” Biden said.

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In an attempt to put on a show of strength and stability, Biden was flanked by senior officials, including Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Biden vowed that not only all Americans in Afghanistan but everyone who had assisted the US military and wanted to leave would be evacuated.

“We’re making the same commitment” to Afghan wartime helpers as to US citizens, Biden said. This would mean a dramatic expansion of the military operations. US officials later revealed that military and intelligence operations were being mounted in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan.

Senior military officials told the Associated Press that a CH-47 Chinook helicopter picked up people and ferried them to the airport on Friday. US Army’s 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division conducted the operation from nearby Camp Sullivan.

In another intervention, 169 Americans were retrieved from the Baron Hotel near the airport, Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Friday evening.

US military officials said sorties like this had been underway for days from various points in Kabul. In other cities and provinces, CIA case officers, special operation forces and Defence Intelligence Agency officers on the ground were gathering some US citizens and Afghan nationals who worked for the US at pre-determined pick-up sites.

Austin told House of Representatives members in a call on Friday afternoon that Americans had been beaten by the Taliban in Kabul. The defence secretary branded the beatings “unacceptable.” His comments conflicted with Biden’s earlier statement that there was “no indication” US citizens had been unable to get to the airport.

Biden’s defence of the US withdrawal was also undercut by Pentagon press secretary John Kirby. He said an al Qaeda presence remained in Afghanistan, contradicting Biden’s declaration that the terrorist organisation was no longer in the country, and therefore the pull-out had been justified.

In reality, the US-led war was never about combatting terrorism. Rather, the still unexplained events of 9/11 were exploited to activate previously drawn-up plans to invade Afghanistan, and later Iraq, to assert US hegemony over the strategic region at the heart of Eurasia following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Al Qaeda and the Taliban were

themselves the product of CIA and other US operations to use Islamist militias to oust the earlier Kremlin-backed government in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

Biden also said that the US had evacuated all 204 employees of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal* who had been in Afghanistan.

For the past two decades, these and other corporate media outlets supported the war as the US and its partners killed over 100,000 people, operated torture chambers, conducted bombing raids and drone assassinations and stripped the country of its resources, while those who exposed the criminal character of the war—such as Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning and Daniel Hale—were incarcerated.

Asked by a reporter why the US did not get people out earlier, Biden said the US had not expected “the total demise of the Afghan National Force.” However, US officials told The Associated Press that in July more than 20 diplomats at the US Embassy in Kabul registered their concerns that the evacuation of selected Afghans was not proceeding quickly enough.

Anxious to deny any failure of US intelligence, Biden said he had gotten a wide variety of time estimates, though all were pessimistic about the Afghan government surviving. He claimed he had been following the advice of Afghanistan’s US-backed president, Ashraf Ghani, who fled the country last weekend.

Above all, Biden denied that US imperialism’s capacity to assert global power had been dented. Asked whether US credibility was now shot, Biden said: “I’ve seen no question on our credibility. The exact opposite. We went and did the mission. It’s time to end this war.”

Referring to the evacuation operations, he declared: “The only country in the world capable of projecting this degree of military power on the far side of the world with this degree of precision is the US.”

Biden is under mounting criticism and pressure from the media and political establishment to expand the military operation and send a message of US intent to reassert its global power. Yesterday’s Murdoch media *Wall Street Journal* published an editorial board

statement, declaring: “Time for a NATO military operation to rescue those trapped behind Taliban lines.”

Already, several Democrats have called the Afghanistan withdrawal a “failure.” Democrat Congressman Dean Philips said: “The exit strategy was ours and its execution reflects poorly on the United States of America.”

On Wednesday, Biden’s National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also rejected journalists’ assertions that the US had “lost credibility.” He stated: “The president, as he has said repeatedly, has no intention of drawing down our forces from South Korea or from Europe, where we have sustained troop presences for a very long time. And when it comes to Taiwan, it is a fundamentally different question from the one we were presented with in Afghanistan.”

Sullivan’s specific reference to Taiwan is another warning of Biden’s escalation of Washington’s confrontation with China. This is only going to intensify as the US prepares to resort to military aggression to counter Beijing’s perceived threat to the global hegemony asserted by US imperialism after World War II.

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